

What is claimed is:

1. A method of selecting contact information, comprising:

5 receiving a signal corresponding to a source document;

analyzing the signal to determine a referenced entity identified in the source document;

10 providing a data base of contact entities, the data base having contact information corresponding to a plurality of contact entities;

determining whether the referenced entity is among the contact entities; and

15 if the referenced entity is among the contact entities, then selecting the contact information corresponding to the referenced entity.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising prompting a sender to provide a message to the referenced entity.

20

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising receiving the message from the sender.

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the Federal Trade Commission. It is the property of the Commission and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency without the prior permission of the Commission.

4. The method of claim 3, further comprising analyzing the message to determine whether the message satisfies criteria specified by the referenced entity.

5 5. The method of claim 4, wherein analyzing the message to determine whether the message satisfies criteria specified by the referenced entity includes determining whether the message has obscenities therein.

10 6. The method of claim 3, further comprising providing the message to the referenced entity.

7. The method of claim 2, prompting the sender to provide a preferred method of delivering the message.

15 8. The method of claim 7, wherein the preferred method may be provided by selecting from a group consisting of e-mail and postal address.

20 9. The method of claim 2, further comprising prompting the sender to provide information required by the referenced entity.

10. The method of claim 2, further comprising providing to the sender conditions that the sender must satisfy prior to sending the message.

5 11. The method of claim 2, further comprising: prompting the sender to provide information; and using the information provided by the sender to categorize the message.

10 12. The method of claim 1, wherein the contact information includes a postal address.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein the contact information includes an Internet address.

15 14. The method of claim 1, wherein the contact information includes a phone number.

15. The method of claim 1, further comprising: 20 determining a key word in the source document that is associated with the referenced entity; and prioritizing selected contact information corresponding to the referenced entity by giving a high priority to contact information associated with the key 25 word.

16. A method of selecting contact information,
comprising:

receiving an identifier corresponding to a source
5 document;

providing a data base having a plurality of
identifiers, each of the plurality of identifiers having
associated therewith contact information corresponding
to entities referenced in the article;

10 determining whether the identifier corresponding to
the source document is among the plurality of
identifiers in the data base; and

if the identifier is among the plurality of
identifiers in the data base, then selecting the contact
15 information corresponding to the entities.

17. The method of claim 16, further comprising
prompting the sender to provide a message to one of the
entities identified in the article.

20

18. The method of claim 17, further comprising
receiving the message from the sender.

19. The method of claim 18, further comprising analyzing the message to determine whether the message satisfies criteria specified by the referenced entity.

5 20. The method of claim 19, wherein analyzing the message to determine whether the message satisfies criteria specified by the referenced entity includes determining whether the message has obscenities therein.

10 21. The method of claim 18, further comprising providing the message to the referenced entity.

22. The method of claim 17, prompting the sender to provide a preferred method of delivering the message.

15 23. The method of claim 22, wherein the preferred method may be provided by selecting from a group consisting of e-mail and postal address.

20 24. The method of claim 17, further comprising prompting the sender to provide information required by the referenced entity.

25. The method of claim 17, further comprising providing to the sender conditions that the sender must satisfy prior to sending the message.

5 26. The method of claim 17, further comprising: prompting the sender to provide information; and using the information provided by the sender to categorize the message.

10 27. The method of claim 16, wherein the contact information includes a postal address.

28. The method of claim 16, wherein the contact information includes an Internet address.

15 29. The method of claim 16, wherein the contact information includes a phone number.

30. An article of manufacture comprising, a computer 20 usable medium having computer readable program code means embodied therein for causing a computer to select contact information, the computer readable program code means in said article of manufacture comprising:

computer readable program code means for instructing the computer to receive a signal corresponding to a source document;

computer readable program code means for
5 instructing the computer to analyze the signal to determine a referenced entity identified in the source document;

computer readable program code means for
instructing the computer to provide a data base of
10 contact entities, the data base having contact information corresponding to a plurality of contact entities;

computer readable program code means for
instructing the computer to determine whether the
15 referenced entity is among the contact entities; and

computer readable program code means for
instructing the computer to select the contact information corresponding to the referenced entity if the referenced entity is among the contact entities.

20
31. The article of manufacture of claim 30, further comprising computer readable program code means for prompting the sender to provide a message to the referenced entity.

32. The article of manufacture of claim 31, further comprising computer readable program code means for receiving the message from the sender.

5 33. The article of manufacture of claim 32, further comprising computer readable program code means for analyzing the message to determine whether the message satisfies criteria specified by the referenced entity.

10 34. The article of manufacture of claim 32, further comprising computer readable program code means for providing the message to the referenced entity.

15 35. The article of manufacture of claim 31, computer readable program code means for prompting the sender to provide a preferred method of delivering the message.

20 36. The article of manufacture of claim 35, further comprising computer readable program code means for allowing the sender to select from a group of preferred methods of delivering the message, consisting of e-mail and postal address.

25 37. The article of manufacture of claim 31, further comprising computer readable program code means for

prompting the sender to provide information required by the referenced entity.

38. The article of manufacture of claim 31, further
5 comprising computer readable program code means for providing to the sender conditions that the sender must satisfy prior to sending the message.

39. The article of manufacture of claim 31, further
10 comprising:

computer readable program code means for prompting the sender to provide information; and

15 computer readable program code means for using the information provided by the sender to categorize the message.

40. The article of manufacture of claim 30, further comprising:

computer readable program code means for
20 determining a key word in the source document that is associated with the referenced entity; and

computer readable program code means for prioritizing selected contact information corresponding to the referenced entity by giving a high priority to
25 contact information associated with the key word.

41. A contact information system, comprising:

a signal processor capable of receiving a signal corresponding to a source document and analyzing the signal to determine a referenced entity identified in
5 the source document;

a data base of contact entities, the data base having contact information corresponding to a plurality of contact entities;

a comparator in communication with the signal
10 processor and the data base, the comparator being capable of receiving from the signal processor information about the referenced entity identified in the source document, and being capable of determining whether the referenced entity is among the plurality of
15 contact entities; and

a signal provider in communication with the comparator and the data base, the signal provider being capable of providing contact information from the data base if the referenced entity is among the plurality of
20 contact entities.

42. The system of claim 41, further comprising a message provider in communication with the signal provider, the message provider being capable of

prompting the sender to provide a message to the referenced entity.

43. The system of claim 42, further comprising a
5 message analyzer in communication with the message provider, the message analyzer being capable of analyzing the message to determine whether the message satisfies criteria specified by the referenced entity.

10 44. A method of providing a sender with contact information, comprising:

receiving a signal corresponding to a source document;
analyzing the signal to determine a plurality of referenced entities identified in the source document;

providing a data base of contact entities, the data base having contact information corresponding to a plurality of contact entities;

determining whether the referenced entities are 20 among the contact entities;

providing a list of referenced entities that are among the contact entities;

selecting from the list of referenced entities one of the referenced entities;

selecting the contact information corresponding to the selected referenced entity; and providing the selected contact information to the sender.

5

45. A method of claim 44, further comprising:

providing counters, each counter being capable of providing a cumulative total, and each counter being associated with one of the referenced entities;

10 incrementing one of the counters when the associated referenced entity is selected;

prioritizing the list of referenced entities by the cumulative totals provided by the counters.

15 46. A method of claim 44, further comprising:

providing a list of contact information items corresponding to the selected referenced entity;

selecting from the list of contact information items one of the contact information items; and

20 providing the selected contact information item to the sender.

47. A method of claim 46, further comprising:

providing counters, each counter being capable of providing a cumulative total, and each counter being

associated with one of the selected contact information items;

incrementing one of the counters when the associated contact information item is selected;

- 5 prioritizing the list of contact information items by the cumulative totals provided by the counters.